United Nations A/66/PV.121

General Assembly
Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

121st plenary meeting
Tuesday, 3 July 2012, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Sajdik (Austria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 35

Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/66/813)

Draft resolution (A/66/L.50)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.50.

Mr. Lomaia (Georgia): Sometimes no news is good news. But that is definitely not so when it comes to the right of return. Another year has passed since the General Assembly adopted its most recent resolution upholding that fundamental right (resolution 65/287). Yet, what we hear from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is that "No major developments took place during the reporting period with regard to refugees and internally displaced persons exercising their right of return" (*A/66/813, para. 12*).

Regrettably, as in years past, the right of return has fallen victim to politically motivated obstructionism. A letter recently circulated among Member States that purportedly focused on this issue revealed an astonishing disregard of the plight of the forcefully displaced. Members of the Assembly have undoubtedly read that letter. To our common amazement, it failed to include a single word about the displaced — not a single word. It was merely a rehash of the same old political arguments. In fact, the author did not even bother to change the date on the letter, which still reads "19 June 2011". Given that disregard for accuracy and the truth, it was no surprise that the letter claimed to include a quotation from the Secretary-General's 2012 report.

Yet, the sentence it cited does not even exist in the report. Instead, it seeks to legitimize the so-called new reality and, referring to the citizens of my country, who come from various ethnic and religious backgrounds, the letter brazenly declares that they "will never be able to exist within a single country". In this new reality, there is no place for the half a million men, women and children — Catholics, Orthodox, Jews and Muslims; and Georgian, Abkhaz, Ossetian, Armenian, Greek, ethnic German and others. They represented a staggering 75 per cent of the pre-war and pre-conflict population, before they were expelled from their homes in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.

The mantra of a new reality suggests that the international community should simply accept a paradigm in which three quarters of the population is ethnically cleansed — an action that is then accounted for as a fait accompli. We believe that an overwhelming majority of the Assembly would beg to differ. Instead, they would agree with what the Secretary-General reiterates in his 2012 report, namely,

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> "It is essential to recognize return as both a human right and a humanitarian issue that must be addressed irrespective of any solution to an underlying conflict." (*A/66/813, para. 34*)

The Secretary-General could hardly have been any clearer. In fact, by introducing draft resolution A/66/L.50, we leave politics aside and focus exclusively on the humanitarian dimension of the problem.

The displaced are consumed by all that they were forced to leave behind. Their once-vibrant communities are now ghost towns or, worse, foreign military garrisons. But those dark visions are leavened by hopeful thoughts, too. They dream of the day they will return to heal their wounds and restore their broken neighbourhoods. They take solace in the Assembly's continued, humane attention to their condition, and they earnestly believe that the unwavering calls of the international community will bear fruit and that those who prevent those men, women and children from returning to their homes will one day be compelled to change their minds. That is why this draft resolution is so important. It encourages the participants in the Geneva talks to redouble their efforts to ensure respect for human rights and create favourable conditions for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of all displaced persons to their places of origin.

We have said it before, and we will continue to say it until justice is delivered: each and every one of those hundreds of thousands of souls carries a dream in their hearts, the dream of returning to the soil that nurtured generations of their ancestors and of sharing it with their children. We continue to believe that maintaining the issue of Georgia's internally displaced persons on the agenda of the General Assembly makes a significant contribution to an eventual return of the displaced. We also believe that the annual report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly is an important tool yielded by the draft resolution. Most important, however, the draft resolution sends a powerful signal to all those forcibly displaced in my country, as well as others in similar conditions all around the world, that is, that the international community stands by them.

Despite the lack of progress in recent years, hundreds of thousands of displaced persons have again vested their expectations in the Assembly, hoping for a helpful decision from it. I urge members to vote in favour of the right of return.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/66/L.50, entitled "Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia".

Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Georgian draft resolution before us (A/66/L.50), as was the case with previous resolutions, is extremely politicized and not in line with reality. Furthermore, it has nothing to do with its authors' apparent concerns about the situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees and so-called high humanitarian goals. It is yet another attempt by those who bear the full responsibility for the region's serious humanitarian situation to push that responsibility off onto others and to draw the attention of the international community to themselves.

The draft resolution has been prepared without taking into account the current political realities in the region. In the title of the draft resolution itself and in its confirmation of the right of return for IDPs and refugees to their homes throughout the entire territory of Georgia, including in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, they appear to be saying that Abkhazia and South Ossetia belong to Georgia. It is time to come to terms with the objective fact that there are two new States in the region, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgia's leadership and its supporters need sooner or later to understand that. The geopolitical reality cannot be changed by means of this distorted draft resolution.

The draft resolution appears to seek the return of IDPs and refugees from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. In reality, it complicates the already fragile negotiation process that is part of the Geneva discussions. Furthermore, those discussions remain the only effective negotiation forum for representatives from Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Georgia, including on humanitarian issues and the situation of refugees and IDPs. No one is surprised by Georgia's stubborn unwillingness to conclude a legally binding agreement on the non-use of force with the South Ossetian and Abkhazian sides.

Against that backdrop, the text's call for "all participants in the Geneva discussions to intensify

their efforts to establish a durable peace, to commit to enhanced confidence-building measures" (*A/66/L.50, para. 5*) is open demagoguery.

If the Georgian side proposes to discuss the subject here in New York, as stipulated in the draft resolution, it is essential that the representatives of Abkhazia and South Ossetia be invited. Such a discussion is meaningless without their participation. This is just another attempt by Georgia to impose a timetable for the return of IDPs. We can only speculate on the motives of the authors of the draft resolution and the reasons that they ignore the position of the Secretary-General, who clearly stated his opinion in his report (A/66/813), to the effect that such a step is not possible at this stage. It is therefore clear to all that Tbilisi is acting from purely political motives and attempting to ignore the humanitarian situation with no care for the fate of thousands of Georgians, Abkhazians, Ossetians and citizens of other nationalities who have suffered as a result of short-sighted and aggressive policies.

The Russian Federation is convinced that the draft resolution that has been introduced by the representative of Georgia will not help to normalize the situation in the region and will not create trust between the Abhazian, South Ossetian and Georgian parties, which is an essential precondition for the return of IDPs. These problems have arisen not through some mythical foreign plot, but as a result of a purposeful policy imposed by the Georgian authorities themselves, which culminated, as we know, in Georgia's attack on peaceful Tskhinvali on the night of 7 August 2008.

Given what I have said, the Russian Federation would ask that we proceed to the vote on the draft resolution, which we will vote against. We trust that Member States will follow our example and will not support this clearly politicized initiative from Tbilisi. In voting against it, they will contribute more to solving the humanitarian problems in that region.

Mrs. Kolontai (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Belarus has carefully studied the draft resolution introduced by the representative of Georgia (A/66/L.50). Our delegation's position remains unchanged: on such an important issue as that of providing assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), a decision must be arrived at by consensus and as the result of an open and transparent negotiation process that includes the participation of all interested parties.

We draw the Assembly's attention to the conclusions contained in the report of the Secretary-General, which says that

> "Over the past three and a half years, the Geneva international discussions, co-chaired by the European Union, [the] OSCE and the United Nations, have remained the single forum for the key stakeholders to discuss security and stability and humanitarian issues, in particular related to the return of refugees and internally displaced persons." (*A/66/813, para. 49*)

In the light of that, we note the importance of maintaining the Geneva consultations format and the quest to find a solution to the issues here together through negotiations. We are concerned about the possibility that a non-consensus adoption of the draft resolution could harm the discussions in Geneva. We know that the adoption of similar resolutions in previous years almost led parties concerned to refuse to be involved in the Geneva negotiation processes. We would propose that we take advantage of those discussions to continue efforts to find mutually acceptable approaches in order to solve the issues raised in the draft resolution through negotiations. In our view, the Geneva format is the most appropriate forum for solving problems relating to security and stability in the region as well as to humanitarian issues, including those involving refugees and internally displaced persons.

Given the situation, the Belarusian delegation maintains the position it expressed during the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly and will not participate in the voting on the draft resolution.

Mrs. Furman (Israel): Israel welcomes the steps the Government of Georgia has taken to implement the strategy on internally displaced persons (IDPs) highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (A/66/813). The strategy has brought about a marked improvement in the humanitarian situation of IDPs. Israel is encouraged by the action plan for implementing the strategy for 2012-2014. Israel also takes a positive view of Georgia's programme of engagement through cooperation, which aims to build trust and confidence among divided communities.

Israel would like to take this opportunity to reiterate once again our support for and recognition of Georgia's territorial integrity. We do not support or recognize any unilateral declarations of independence by Abkhazia or South Ossetia. We reiterate our well-established

position that the way to resolve long-standing conflicts is through a negotiated, mutually agreed approach, and not through unilateral actions.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.50, entitled "Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia".

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Comoros, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominica, Estonia, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Grenada, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Tuvalu, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vanuatu

Against:

Armenia, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nauru, Nicaragua, Russian Federation, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Israel, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Suriname, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Zambia

Draft resolution A/66/L.50 was adopted by 60 votes to 15, with 82 abstentions (resolution 66/283).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Greece and the Netherlands advised the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour; and the delegation of Kuwait that it had intended to abstain.]

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote following the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Rey (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland abstained from the voting on resolution 66/283, which was introduced by the representative of Georgia and entitled "Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia".

As a constant in our policies, Switzerland recalls the obligation that exists to pay particular attention to the situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in post-conflict situations, as well as their right to return to their places of origin. We intend to provide the most favourable conditions for the discussions that began in Geneva following the 2008 conflict. We believe those talks to be the appropriate forum for dealing with the issue of internally displaced persons and refugees. Consequently, Switzerland supports all efforts of the international community aimed at making a consensus solution possible among the parties on the question of IDPs and refugees.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): I take the floor to briefly explain our position. We are concerned about the fact that the conflicts in the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions of Georgia remain unresolved. The situation has serious economic, social and humanitarian consequences, primarily for the people of Georgia but also for the peoples of the Caucasus region as a whole.

Turkey supports all efforts aimed at the peaceful resolution of those conflicts. We invite all parties to work towards a comprehensive and sustainable peace that also provides for the return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. As a country of the region and a neighbour of Georgia, we stand ready to contribute all efforts towards that end.

I wish to reiterate Turkey's firm commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Georgia with its internationally recognized borders.

We continue to believe that the Geneva talks provide a valuable forum to also address the issue of the voluntary, safe, dignified and unhindered return of IDPs and refugees. We hope that the discussions at Geneva can be made to bear their full potential in order to have a positive and concrete outcome. To achieve that, we call on all sides to seriously engage with others in a cooperative manner and take action to build confidence.

Ms. Ivanović (Serbia): I take the floor to briefly explain our position following the voting on resolution 66/283, which we have just adopted.

As a country that has faced a long-standing problem with internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees on its territory, Serbia is fully committed to finding just, comprehensive and sustainable solutions for displacement situations all over the world that include full respect for the rights of displaced populations, in particular, the right of all refugees and internally displaced persons to return safely to their homes without preconditions and with adequate security guarantees.

To that end, we believe that the General Assembly should continue to deal with displacement issues in the comprehensive framework of the draft resolutions on the protection of and assistance to IDPs and refugees adopted annually or biannually in the Third Committee by consensus. Serbia is a sponsor of those draft resolutions because they address human rights issues in addition to having a very important humanitarian dimension.

We support the long-standing practice in the General Assembly of finding a common understanding in addressing sensitive humanitarian issues by adopting thematic humanitarian draft resolutions by consensus. Given that today there are many different situations involving displacement all around the world, singling out specific situations of displacement through specific resolutions could lead to the proliferation of such resolutions in the General Assembly while their adoption by vote provides fewer prospects for the real improvement and solution of the situation of refugees and IDPs on the ground.

Serbia respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States Members of the United Nations, including Georgia, and understands Georgia's concern about the status of internally displaced persons and refugees. We support every effort to find a consensual solution for the specific situations of internally displaced persons and refugees. Therefore, draft resolutions aiming for such solutions should, in our view, be adopted by consensus. That is why, as in previous years, while recognizing the importance of elements contained in the resolution that has just been adopted which apply to the problem of displacement in general, Serbia could not support it.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia.

Mr. Lomaia (Georgia): Together we have just adopted resolution 66/283, which lifts the spirits of hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees who were forced by violence and fear to flee their homes and communities. It is on behalf of those men, women and children, citizens of Georgia of various ethnic and religious backgrounds, that I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to the General Assembly.

Today's vote marks the fifth straight year that the Assembly has invoked the norms and principles of international law to defend the right of every displaced person to return to his or her home. With each passing year, the circle of understanding and support is widening. I know that, in some cases, the Assembly's support of the resolution might not have come easily — a fact that had little to do with the merits of the resolution itself. That makes the Assembly's affirmative vote even more noteworthy. Unfortunately, the moral clarity that guides us all on the issue today has been challenged once again by blatant attempts to politicize the resolution. But truth and dignity prevailed and the resolution was adopted by an even greater margin than in previous years.

Back in 2008, we started the battle with just 14 votes cast in favour; we now stand at 60. I have no doubt that soon, through our common efforts, a majority of the general membership will stand in support of the resolution. Rest assured that we remain as determined

as ever to bring dignity and relief to our compatriots who have suffered for so long. We will engage with all stakeholders to ensure that the right of return is respected and exercised.

Finally, on behalf of all those who have suffered from violence and discrimination, we would like once again to express our heartfelt gratitude to each and every Member State that voted in favour of the resolution.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 35?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 14 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Draft resolution (A/66/L.51)

The Acting President: Members will recall that, at its 72nd plenary meeting, held on 2 December 2011, the General Assembly held a debate on agenda item 14 jointly with agenda item 117, agenda item 123 and its sub-item (a), and agenda item 124. Members will also recall that, under agenda item 14, the Assembly adopted resolution 66/28 at its 118th plenary meeting, held on 28 June.

I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.51.

Mr. Iziraren (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.51, on the International Year of Crystallography, on behalf of the following sponsors: Australia, Belgium, Chile, the People's Republic of China, the Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, India, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mexico, Poland, and my own country, Morocco.

Today, the influence of science on the lives of people and its role in the development process is well recognized. Since its inception, 100 years ago, modern crystallography has developed in close cooperation with other scientific disciplines and has had a considerable impact in various years, such as the development of modern medicines, nanotechnology, biotechnology and the manufacture of aircraft components, which clearly shows the close links between crystallography and various sectors of industry.

Moreover, crystallography is an excellent example of the universality of science because it permeates several other sciences at the most basic levels, including physics, biology, medicine, chemistry, mineralogy, geosciences and cultural heritage. The importance of the scientific achievements in crystallography has been demonstrated in the more than 20 Nobel Prizes awarded in this discipline. The awarding of those prizes has also shown broad gender balance worldwide.

At the international level, crystallographers are represented by the International Union of Crystallography, which was founded in 1948 and whose mission is to serve the crystallographic community and promote international cooperation. Three regional associations further that cooperation in various parts of the world, including North-South cooperation, namely, the American Crystallographic Association for North and South America, the Asian Crystallographic Association for the South Pacific and Asia and the European Crystallographic Association for Europe and Africa. Regional associations play an important role in promoting crystallography in the North-South dialogue, all the more so since education and the exchange of scientific knowledge are an essential component of North-South cooperation in the area of crystallography.

The purpose of the draft resolution is to mark the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of modern crystallography by declaring 2014 as the International Year of Crystallography. The crystallographic community throughout the world enthusiastically welcomes the idea of commemorating the anniversary of the birth of modern crystallography.

The purposes of the International Year of Crystallography are to provide a framework for celebrating the one hundredth anniversary of modern crystallography, to promote international cooperation among scientists worldwide, to raise awareness of the role of crystallography in the development of modern technology, to illustrate the universality of science, to promote education in crystallography and its ties with other sciences, and to intensify crystallography programmes in all regions of the world where there is not sufficient education in crystallography, in particular in developing countries. All of the those goals are closely linked, and it is expected that the International Year of Crystallography will have a strong educational component, primarily for developing countries and for countries where the disciple is less developed.

The draft resolution invites UNESCO to facilitate the commemoration of the International Year of Crystallography in close cooperation with Governments, the International Union of Crystallography, regional crystallographic associations and United Nations bodies. The draft resolution also encourages all Member States, United Nations bodies and other interested parties to take advantage of the Year to promote initiatives at all levels aimed at raising public awareness on the importance of crystallography and ensuring broader access to new knowledge and activities in that sphere.

Before concluding, I would like to express my country's appreciation to all sponsors of the draft resolution for their support and commitment. I would also like to thank all delegations that participated actively and constructively in the consultations process. Finally, I urge all delegations to join the sponsors of the draft resolution.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.51 entitled "International Year of Crystallography".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/66/L.51?

Draft resolution A/66/L.51 was adopted (resolution 66/284).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to the speaker in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Mr. Archondo (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of the Plurinational State of Bolivia would like to congratulate the sponsors of resolution 66/284, which proclaims the year 2014 as the International Year of Crystallography. We recognize the understanding that humankind has of the material nature of the world on the basis, in particular, of knowledge of crystallography.

With regard to nanotechnology and biotechnology, which are referred to in the resolution just adopted, the Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia would like to underscore the fact that while those technologies have brought about scientific advances in the modern world in such fields as public health, medicine and other areas, when it comes to developing new materials through those new technologies, an adequate use of those technologies should be ensured when developing products for daily use so that they do not have a negative impact on the environment, public health and food.

I would like to recall that, in various international forums, civil society organizations and sine researchers have expressed their concern about the development of certain applications in both biotechnology and nanotechnology that are being carried out without adequate regulation or clear and precise information on the consequences thereof. For that reason, they have set out the need, for example, to apply an immediate global moratorium on some applications of those technologies until we better understand their effects. Furthermore, they have also warned that particles artificially constructed at the nano scale could present new risks for health and the environment.

The technology of crystallography is used in Bolivia in the area of structural research, particularly in the area of research into the resources from extraction in the Salar de Uyuni. In geological research and the study of mineral raw materials, crystallographic analysis is not only helpful, it provides data for identifying materials and the further development of new applications in the following areas: new types of clean energy, particularly the use of semiconductors; the area of the photocatalytic processes; electrodes for energy systems; and catalysts for transforming hydrocarbons in petroleum and gas chemical products used in the field of gas synthesis, the transformation of liquid gas and the production of oxygen and alcohol, among others.

Moreover, in the area of mineral processing in general, particularly of extracted resources, we in Bolivia have been working since 1986 on testing lithium and treating the salt layers of the Salar de Uyuni. Bolivia, which is a country relatively new to the development of science and technology, has been using crystallography in developing its natural resources, daily developing technological processes to transform its raw materials, particularly in lithium production and the lithium and potassium salts of Bolivia's Salar de Uyuni.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union to make a statement following the adoption of the resolution.

Mr. Bulanek (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

We are pleased to join the consensus today on resolution 66/284, which proclaims 2014 as the International Year of Crystallography. We recognize the broad impact that crystallography has on many scientific fields, and the benefits it offers society as a whole. Discoveries in this field have formed the basis for developments in the medical and public health sectors, as well as solutions to plant and soil contamination, among other issues. There is no doubt that the results of crystallographic research can have a positive impact on development and can help in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We therefore support the promotion of crystallography in order to improve knowledge of the science, and we call for its continued support.

However, we would like to take this opportunity to express our concern about the recent proliferation of resolutions that proclaim international observances, particularly international years. More than 30 years ago, the Economic and Social Council established, by consensus, guidelines on international years, which were subsequently affirmed by the General Assembly in 1998. They were designed to support the implementation of international observances and to promote their best possible impact by setting clear guidelines for Member States' consideration of such proposals. In recent years, unfortunately, those guidelines have rarely been met. Since 2001, seven years have been designated as international years for more than three topics at the same time, a direct contradiction of the Economic and Social Council guidelines. The year 2009 saw the celebration of five different international years.

We are concerned that continuing the practice of declaring overlapping international observances for the same time frame could lead to less attention being paid to the important topics they are intended to highlight, on the part of both Member States and the wider international community. We are trying to inspire with such declarations, and not to have an adverse impact on the achievements they proclaim. We therefore call on all Member States to work together to ensure proper observance of the guidelines we have set for ourselves, in order to ensure than international years continue to receive the attention they deserve and to have a continued positive impact on international development and solidarity.

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 14.

Agenda item 32 (*continued*)

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Draft resolution (A/66/L.52)

The Acting President: Members will recall that the Assembly considered agenda item 32 at its 60th plenary meeting, on 18 November 2011.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to introduce draft resolution A/66/L.52.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in its capacity as of Chair of the International Movement of New or Restored Democracies, to introduce to the General Assembly the draft resolution contained in document A/66/L.52, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies". It has been an arduous but enriching experience for my country to facilitate the drafting of this draft resolution. In our view, the long hours of negotiations have resulted in a balanced, substantive text that duly reflects the spirit of this noble cause. In that connection, we would like to offer our thanks to the large number of countries that have sponsored the draft resolution.

The high-level international conferences for new and restored democracies have set in motion a movement for promoting democratic development and encouraging a new style of international cooperation on democratization within the frameworks of social justice and religious and cultural diversity. It is important to recognize, as this draft resolution does, that while democracies share common characteristics, there is not one single model of democracy alone, and that every State has the sovereign right to elect and freely determine its own political, social, economic and cultural system, in accordance with the will of its people and without interference from other States, in strict conformity with the Charter of the United Nations.

We therefore urge the Governments, parliaments, civil society and social movements of the world to create mechanisms and spaces aimed at consolidating new and restored democracies, and to participate actively in the process of international conferences for those democracies.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/66/L.52, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Botnaru (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I would like to announce that, since the submission of draft resolution A/66/L.52, in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Guatemala, Guyana, Iceland, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Montenegro, Norway, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Slovakia, Sweden, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia, Turkey and Uruguay.

The Acting President: May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/66/L.52?

Draft resolution A/66/L.52 was adopted (resolution 66/285).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 32?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.